

**WATER AND FOOD SECURITY - RIVERS IN A GLOBAL  
CONTEXT**  
**“Community Involvement in Managing Rivers”**

**TITLE: ‘The Media as a Tool to Enhance Community Involvement in  
Managing River Nile’**

**A Paper**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS:**

CBO	-	Community Based Organizations
FM	-	Frequency Modulation
LTV	-	Light Television (Christian Based Television)
NGO	-	Non Government Organizations
PCDSD	-	Participatory Communication for Democracy and Sustainable Development
RUDMEC	-	Rural Development Media Communications
TV	-	Television
UTV	-	Uganda Television

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

The mass media—broad concept is classified as the electronic media covering radio, television and the internet; the print media covering newspapers, news letters, magazines and posters; while the non broadcast caters for theatre, murals, rural outreach, folk songs, focus groups discussion, bill boards, street dramas etc.

The media is an instrumental tool for community mobilization aiming at behavioral change, which can play an effective role in the creation, and raising awareness about sustainable management of water resources as well as advocating for effective measures to be used in the campaign against poor natural resource management.

The role of the media is therefore to inform, educate, entertain, stimulate local, national as well as international debate and mobilize communities against poor utilization of water resources.

Despite the challenges that are in the way notably the high rate of airtime, poor accessibility of newspapers, media bias and the opinion and attitude of some editors in media houses, Uganda has a vibrant and conventional media with over 100 fm radio stations around the country, 7 television stations and more than 10 newspapers; a wide non broadcast media that can reach the vast majority of people with campaigns against poor utilization of water resources.

In response to the above, both government and private institutions have come out with educational media programmes to address the problems of water resource management.

One of the civil society organizations actively creating awareness campaign is Rural Development Media Communications (RUDMEC)

RUDMEC is a media non- government organisation that focuses mostly on the rural setting while addressing contemporary issues. It comprises of more than 40 trained development communicators, drawn from different media houses and NGOs in Uganda and is linked to various community based organisation (CBOs) and NGOs working in rural areas. RUDMEC collaborates with government institutions such as National Environment Management Authority, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Lands, Water and Environment, Ministry of Health, Ministry Gender and Labour among others. At the same time partners with International organizations working in line with the objectives.

RUDMEC mission is to initiate behavioural change using the media as a change agent to enhance better livelihood.

## **1.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS**

Water is a natural resource endowment, rivers, lakes and rainfall.

River Nile, the longest in the world gives life to diversified cultures as it flows from Uganda to the Mediterranean Sea. It is used to generate hydroelectric power for both domestic and industrial purposes, rafting for tourists' attraction and irrigation in North African countries for example, Egypt and Sudan.

The predominantly remote fishing and farming communities of Bukungu, Kapiokolo, Kyankole, Kiiga, Itania, Kisaike, Iremeria, Isis, Kiribairya, Kakooge, Igoola and Lyingo are distributed along the shoreline of River Nile and Lake Kyoga in Kamuli District and are affected by poverty, disease and illiteracy. These socio-economic setbacks have impacted severely on aquatic resources and habitat.

## **1.2 PROBLEMS**

Deteriorating environmental condition of the river as a result of pollution, dumping and flora harvest.

The enormous living and dead biomass of vegetation may lead to the production of methane gas which does not support oxygen (Euthropication process) in the water, making aquatic life difficult thus suffocating.

The communities' understanding is limited to getting livelihood from these natural resources yet beyond this there are unique roles of this eco-systems such as nutrient rich environment, energy climate functions intrinsic value among others

The vegetation along the water resource is cut and used in fish smoking and construction of huts for accommodation, impacting mostly on the terrestrial habitats, leaving the riverbanks dry and upset the geological process of erosion from upstream to down stream. It is most destructive of riverine and traps a lot of sediment altering the water quality, temperature and even reducing its depth. This hinders development as it affects the production fish, agriculture, energy etc, hence impacting negatively on socio-economic situation in the community (let alone dropping the water levels of the river Nile and resulting into low production of the hydro power which serves the whole country).

The use of poor methods of fishing as, Illegal fishing gears, herbs and chemicals, which kills some water animals leaving no future for the resource.

As lorries/truck ferry fish to the nearest towns for sale, little money is paid to the fishermen at the landing sites because they long to sale off their fish before it goes bad as there are limited methods of preserving fish.

They only preserve fish by smoking to prepare it for prolonged marketing. This is not efficiently done and some times the fish ends up rotting.

As all the fish is sold off very little is left for their own consumption thereby exposing children to malnutrition because they have limited protein alternative.

Furthermore, according to the Ministry of Healthy demographic monthly reports, this is one of the areas with high death rates of malaria, high reproductive health problems, with poor sanitation management and extreme poor hygiene.

With the little incomes coupled with illiteracy, they some times spent on non-productive activities like prostitution, liquor, drug peddlers and entertainment spots, which expose them to STDs and HIV/AIDS infection. This has led to increased vulnerability of children, women and the working age is incapacitated. Child labour is as a result of this. Children below the age of 12 drop out of schools to work in order to survive and cater for others. These children work as fishers, sex workers drug peddlers etc.

Lack of banking facilities leaves no savings and credit opportunities to these people. There is no proper road network and a long distance to administrative structures in the areas.

### **1.3 MEDIA PROGRAMMES**

RUDMEC with the objective of strengthening grassroots communication and information activities to empower the unprivileged people, creates awareness and mobilizes community action in proper management of water resources using Multi-media approach

It targets all stakeholders, civil society, academic institutions, political leaders and entire Uganda community in general.

It highlights good and bad practices in water resource management and brings out the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders and at the same time expose the poor practices used and how they can be eliminated.

This is done using the following mechanism:-

- Public awareness media programmes i.e. dialogues, seminars etc.
- Advocating for bye-law formulation and review to address water management
- Support information exchange on good practice in water management
- Disseminating information through multi media activities.

**1.4 RUDMEC MEDIA ACTIVITIES AND ITS TARGET AUDIENCES AT COMMUNITY LEVEL**

<b>Mass Media</b>	<b>Proposed Format</b>	<b>Media House</b>	<b>Targets</b>
RADIO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk shows</li> <li>• Phone in live shows</li> <li>• Magazine features</li> <li>• News</li> <li>• Spot announcements</li> <li>• Drama</li> </ul>	Radio Uganda Local FM radios	Riparian Communities Policy Makers Law enforcement group
TELEVISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drama</li> <li>• Documentaries</li> <li>• News coverage</li> <li>• Pictures on news</li> <li>• Fisheries programmes</li> </ul>	(ALL TV STATIONS IN UGANDA (WBS UTV,LTV, TOP TV)	Opinion leaders Riparian Communities Policy makers
PRINT MEDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural Resource Management page</li> <li>• News features</li> <li>• Pictures</li> <li>• Supplements</li> </ul>	The New Vision The Monitor, The Weekly Observer All local news papers	Opinion leaders Riparian Communities including NGOs and CBOs Government (Policy Makers )
NON BROADCAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Popular theatre</li> <li>• Radio listener clubs</li> <li>• Mobile cinemas</li> <li>• Churches</li> <li>• Mosques</li> <li>• Training of Trainer</li> <li>• Peer Education</li> </ul>	Artistes Public announcements Message by religious leaders Local councils Public gathering Youth and Women Fishing community	RUDMEC The committees Opinion leaders Local authorities

## **1.5 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT**

- (i) Community responses to the media campaign. Formation of Radio listenership clubs, Beach Management Unit to take care of the river banks hygiene and the conservation of the vegetation along the shoreline.
- (ii) Involved in environmental planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at all levels and empower them to manage their own resources: Formation of Community Environment Committees, Environment Youth Clubs, School Environment Clubs - primary – secondary level.
- (iii) Management decisions and accountability closer to the land and natural resource users. They contribute to the District Environment Action Plan.
- (iv) Aware of resource ownership rights (e.g. individuals and communities)
- (v) Awareness of right to live in a clean and healthy environment behaviour and attitudes

## **1.6 THE WAYFORD**

RUDMEC needs support to build her capacity to reach wider areas of this kind and reinforce her implementation of the media programmes. These include financial, institutional, human among others.

Strengthen grassroots communication and information activities to empower the communities to make wise decisions in addressing their own problems.

Sustainable management of community water resources through effective stakeholder participation and promotion of integrated water resources management.

Taking informal credit services (without collateral security) to the riparian communities: By doing this the communities will develop alternative means of livelihoods.

Ensure that Functional Adult Literacy Programmes are availed to communities; This will improve the capabilities of the communities to understand issues and act accordingly.

Some Non-government Organizations (NGOs) who have come up to tackle some of these problems by involving the communities in utilizing aquatic resource in a sustainable manner are isolated. Such NGOs should work as engines and the media as a vehicle in the fight against unwise use of water resources.

Ensure that globalization effects don't marginalize riparian communities.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

Participatory Rural Appraisal among different stakeholders in the riparian communities by using a multi-media strategy is significant to lobby and advocate for policies that promote an integrated, sustainable livelihoods approach by developing alternatives that will add value to certain resources, thereby relieving pressure on other scarce water resource.

Sensitizing the stakeholders to influence national/international agenda on proper utilization and management of resources through providing education facilities, health units, good roads, credit and banking systems to the communities.

Involving communities in creating policies through a bottom-up approach and participate in all stages of any developmental project at the shoreline, starting from planning to the implementation and follow-up of projects